How Much Is Enough?

Objective: Students will list reasons for and against the establishment

of an additional national park. They will plan the amount

and type of use this area should receive.

Background: This activity examines the criteria for establishing

National Park Service areas in the United States and addresses the questions of how much land should be preserved and how much public use should be allowed on these lands. The following information can be used to introduce the activity.

Procedures: Divide the class into nine groups. Ask the groups to represent one of the following view points: Chamber of Commerce, hunters, recreational vehicle owners, loggers, miners, backpackers, photographers, National Park Service, and an environmental organization. These groups are to defend or oppose the designation of a new park area based on their perception of the need to preserve such areas or on their advocacy of plans for use and development of the area.

Using a map, help the students locate an area that might be used as the focus for this study (try to use an area near you). The hearing board should research the proposal and consider how it might affect the community. How many national parks are in the area? How else could the land be used?

Each group can research and prepare testimony to be considered by the hearing board. All concerned individuals should define their positions clearly. Suggest that questions and discussion include attention to the following:

- 1. What would be the impact of the proposed national park on the local economy in the short and long run?
- 2. How would the wildlife within these national parks be managed (look at several limiting factors such as migration patterns, water, vegetation, human impacts)?
- 3. If our population continues to expand, should we anticipate a still greater demand on these areas? What other factors might affect trends in recreation (price of gas, more leisure time, economics)?
- 4. Should our existing areas be managed to accommodate more visitors or limit their access to, the park? If so, how? What problems might be solved or created by your proposal?
- 5. Under what circumstances, if any, might citizens be prevented from entering and using a park?
- 6. Is recreation the only purpose of the park? What was the original intent establishing the national park?
- 7. What other possible means are there for attempting to most effectively maintain our national park and wilderness areas?

Once the students have researched their various points of view, elect a hearing board of 3 to 5 students. Establish a chairperson to convene the meeting. Once the meeting starts, the chairperson recognizes participants who then make their presentations. Presentations should be limited to no more than five minutes each.

The hearing board members could offer a recommendation based on the testimony and discussion they have heard. They could also ask the groups to work out a compromise to solve the problem. If a compromise is accepted, continue discussion to determine what each side may have sacrificed. Discuss the type of development that will be allowed, if any, and their long-term effects. Are these equitable trade-offs? Why or why not? It is important to remember that National Parks are created and protected for every one in our country. It is ultimately the decision of Congress as to whether a park is created or not. Congress seeks local and national input in making their decisions. Many communities have worked hard to have a special area designated as a National Park.

Extension: For extra credit, have students research the similarities and differences between a) national parks, b) national forests, c) national wilderness areas, d) national wildlife refuges, e) national monuments, and f) national recreation areas. What activities are generally allowed or prohibited in each? What agencies are responsible for the management of each? What problems, if any, are presently affecting the management of each?